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State Department review completed

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4 November 1956

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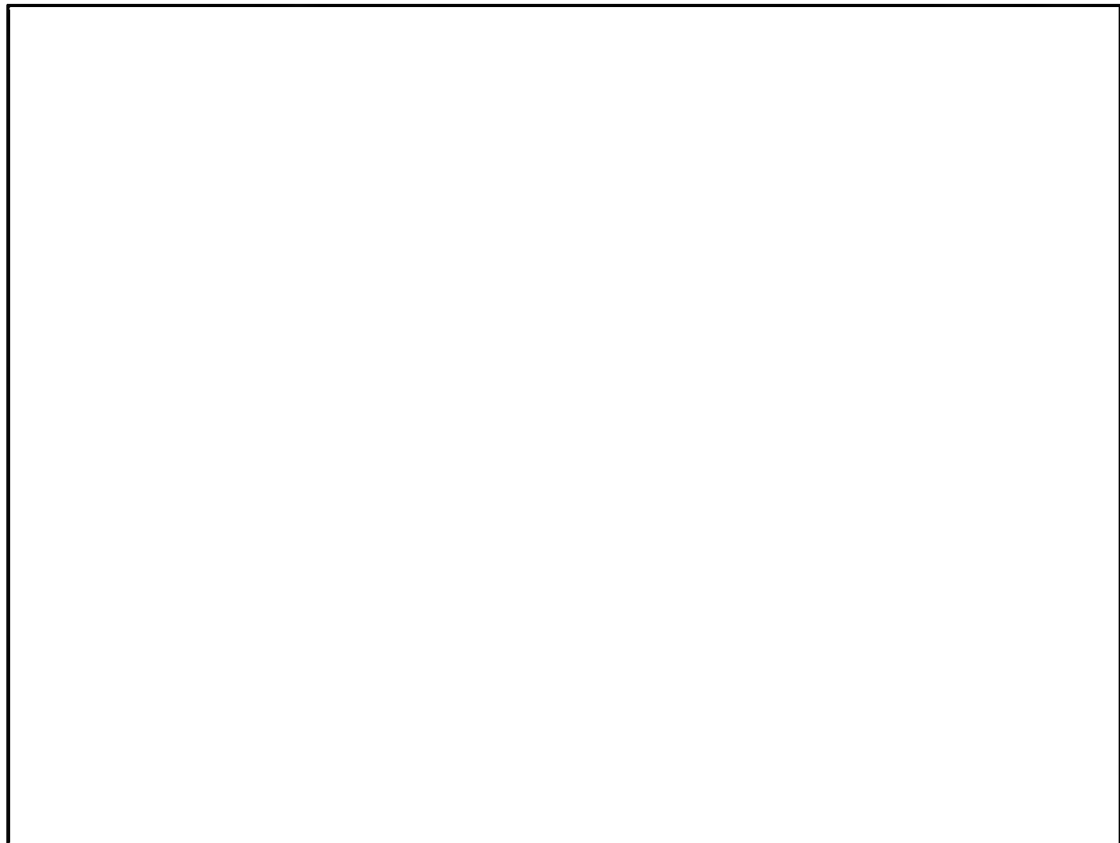
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**6. PEIPING'S PROTEST AGAINST BRITISH AND FRENCH
"WANTON AGGRESSION"**

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Peiping's official protest of 3 November over the "wanton aggression" of Britain and France against Egypt concludes with the warning that persistence in this course will entail "inestimably grave consequences."

Previous statements had suggested that Chinese Communist leaders were considering what action they might take in the Suez crisis in order to increase the bloc's influence in the Asian-African countries. The Anglo-French action creates an opportunity for Peiping to threaten retaliation against Hong Kong in order to bring pressure to bear on the British.

There have been indications of increases in Chinese Communist ground force strength near Hong Kong in recent weeks. Some 65,000 Chinese troops are within 50 miles of Hong Kong, which could probably not be held long by British forces alone. There are approximately 14,000 troops in Hong Kong.

Peiping's various statements about Egypt have been similar to but not so violent in tone as its pronouncements prior to intervention in Korea in autumn 1950. Further and stronger denunciations of the British would probably precede an attack on Hong Kong.

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7. REACTIONS TO SUEZ POLICY IN BRITISH AND FRENCH PARLIAMENTS

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The resignation of Anthony Nutting, a protégé of Prime Minister Eden, as minister of state in the Foreign Office--announced on 4 November--provides a potential rallying point for any spread of Conservative disaffection with Prime Minister Eden's Middle East policies. Nutting, however, does not have a large personal following, and most other Conservatives with misgivings have so far refrained from expressing them publicly.

The American embassy estimated on 2 November that although some 30 Conservative members of Parliament are distressed at the government's actions, Eden will continue to command a majority provided Britain's military intervention in Egypt is short and decisive. The government's margin in the vote of confidence on 1 November was 59.

In France, too, there is a strong feeling that speed is essential. Premier Mollet still has the solid support of all non-Communist elements for his Suez policy, but worry over the possible repercussions in North Africa continues.

The non-Communist press continues to back Mollet, but some editors have indicated privately their concern over the government's policy. Embassy contacts in the working level of the Foreign Ministry have expressed strong disapproval of Mollet's action, and some Socialist leaders, though withholding their criticism, are known to be opposed.

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